

asking instructions from Nicholas, who was then at army headquarters at Mogilev. The Tsar replied: First, dissolve the Duma, the main source of trouble; second, suppress the riots at any cost, with full use of military force.

Rumors circulated that the Duma refused to adjourn, but actually it decided to obey the Tsar's order although its members remained in Petrograd for "private conferences." The committee of these conferences later became known as the Temporary Committee of the Duma.

To execute the Tsar's second order, the Military Governor of Petrograd summoned several regiments of the Imperial Guard to Nevsky Prospect. The troops were ordered to fire and the crowds were mowed down and scattered, but this was a Pyrrhic victory for the government.

Rumors of the massacre spread throughout the city, arousing public wrath. During the night groups of workers went from barracks to barracks urging the soldiers to join the people. The soldiers promised to turn their guns against the officers should these order them to fire against the people. Excitement grew among the troops. That night was decisive. Between sunset of March 11 and dawn of March 12, the Petrograd garrison joined the revolt. Then and there local disorders became a revolution.

On March 12 the Military Governor had no time to think of dispersing the crowds in the streets. His most urgent task was to prevent an open uprising in the garrison. A hand-picked task force was sent to the barracks to arrest the ringleaders. The force departed in good order but never reached its destination. Men began to drop out of the ranks to plunge into the crowds on the sidewalks. The few who remained in formation warned the officer that they would not fire and were ordered back to their quarters.

Before noon, soldiers of several regiments broke into the arsenals, took arms, and assembled on the parade grounds, ready to march. They did not know where to go but they wanted to join the people. Two regiments—Volynsky and Litovsky—started almost simultaneously to march toward the Tauride Palace. Policemen were shot down in the streets. Armed crowds broke into the Crosses and other jails and liberated political prisoners and many common criminals as well. The courthouse and the headquarters of the political police (Ochrana) were set on fire. There was strong suspicion that the burning of the latter building with all its archives was instigated by agents of the old regime.

The government disintegrated. Some cabinet members thought of resisting from the Winter Palace but abandoned this plan and went into hiding. The entire city was in the hands of mutinous